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Deposits from the ex-ration shop licensees

* 2949 *Q.*—SRI S. R. ARUMUGAM : Will the Hon. the Minister for Agriculture be pleased to state—

(*a*) whether any amount received from the ration shop licensees as deposits when statutory rationing was in force, is with the Government still to be refunded to them; and

(*b*) if so, the amount so pending and when it is likely to be refunded?

THE HON. SRI M. BHAKTAVATSALAM : (*a*) Yes, Sir.

(*b*) The amount pending is about three lakhs of rupees. The main reasons for the delay in refunding the amounts are :

(1) many of the ex-ration shop-keepers have not claimed refund of deposits ;

(2) in certain cases the deposit amounts have lapsed to Government after expiry of time-limit. Sanction of Accountant-General has to be obtained for the refund of the amounts as and when applications are received;

(3) certain dealers have failed to produce clearance certificates from the Commercial Taxes Department and the Income-tax Department; and

(4) some of the dealers have left the place and their whereabouts are not known. All possible steps are being taken to refund the pending amounts quickly as and when applications are received.

Toda families in the State

12 noon. * 2950 *Q.*—SRI V. GOPALA GOUNDER (on behalf of Sri P. Rangaswami Reddiar) : Will the Hon. the Minister for Religious Endowments and Transport be pleased to state—

(*a*) The number of Toda families in our State;

(*b*) whether it is a fact that the population of Todas is decreasing year after year;

(*c*) if so, the steps taken by the Government to preserve this ancient race; and

(*d*) whether any expert opinion was taken as to how to preserve this race?

THE HON. SRI B. PARAMESWARAN : (*a*) Todas are found only in the Nilgiris district in this State. The number of Toda families in the Nilgiris district is 224.

(*b*) & (*c*) No, Sir. Steps have however been taken to preserve this ancient race. A Mobile Medical Unit is working under the control of the District Medical Officer, the Nilgiris, for the last two years. It is rendering medical help among the Todas residing in different parts of this district.

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(d) Anthropologists and several doctors from foreign countries have visited the Toda munds and examined their common diseases. Blood tests are being conducted regularly by the Medical Department to combat the maladies from which Todas are suffering. About 90 per cent of the Todas have been cured of their ailments through proper treatment by the Mobile Medical Unit.

Public holidays for "Onam" and "Vishu"

* 2951 Q.—SRI M. NARAYANA KURUP : Will the Hon. the Minister for Finance and Education be pleased to state—

(a) whether the Government have received a memorandum dated 20th June 1955, from the Bank Employees' Association, Kozhikode, requesting them to declare "Onam" and "Vishu" as public holidays under the Negotiable Instruments Act; and

(b) if so, the action taken thereon?

THE HON. SRI C. SUBRAMANIAM : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) At present "Onam" and "Vishu" are declared as general holidays for the State Government Offices in the Malabar district. In addition, the day before and the day next to "Onam" are local holidays in that district, in substitution of two penultimate Saturdays. The request of the Bank Employees' Association, Kozhikode, for declaring "Onam" and "Vishu" as public holidays under the Negotiable Instruments Act, was considered by Government and it has been decided, that in view of the inconvenience that is likely to be caused to banks and commercial bodies as a result of any change, and in view of the facilities provided already in Malabar for the observance of "Onam" and "Vishu", there was no need to change the existing practice in regard to the grant of holidays for these two festivals. The Vice-President of the Association was informed accordingly.

Service conditions of workers in Polytechnics

* 2952 Q.—SRI S. RAMALINGAM (on behalf of Sri M. Kalyanasundaram) : Will the Hon. the Minister for Agriculture be pleased to state—

(a) whether the Government have received any memorandum during June 1955 from the workers attached to the Madurai Polytechnic workshop regarding regularization of their service conditions; and

(b) if so, the action taken thereon?

THE HON. SRI M. BHAKTAVATSALAM : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The question of regularization of the service conditions of the workers employed in the Madurai Polytechnic is being examined by the Government.